

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

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## **THINK OF ASYLUM SEEKER KIDS ON INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN’S DAY**

**CANBERRA** — RURAL Australians for Refugees national president Marie Sellstrom – meeting federal parliamentarians in Canberra yesterday and today – says tomorrow’s observance of International Children’s Day will remind many Australians that not all children wake to a daily life of freedom and play.

She said 52 asylum seeker and refugee children on Nauru and three in onshore detention in Melbourne Immigration Transit Accommodation were experiencing physical and mental illness.

“Their parents are deeply depressed and these children see their parents humiliated by the authorities,” Ms Sellstrom said.

“Tomorrow, on International Children’s Day, I ask all compassionate Australians to think of these children and their families. I ask them to take the time to tell our parliamentarians that these children deserve the same hope and joy that our children, growing up in the comfort of Australian families and homes, expect.”

Ms Sellstrom said the October 20 Wentworth by-election showed that Australians saw through major party political slogans, such as ‘Stop the boats’, and the heartlessness of the federal government’s offshore regional processing policy for those seeking asylum in Australia.

“Children must not be used for political point scoring,” she said. “Australians expect better than that. Rural Australians for Refugees believes in human rights for all children, particularly those for whom we have a duty of care. RAR says to the politicians of Australia: ‘Please listen to us. Australians say ‘no’ to children in detention’.”

RAR on October 16 convened a major #KidsOffNauru rally at Parliament House to appeal to federal parliamentarians to end the grave distress suffered by asylum seekers long bound by Australia’s regional offshore processing policy.

RAR is concerned specifically with Australia’s obligation to meet a basic human need – to provide safe homes *in Australia or another country that would welcome them* for children and families who have sought Australians’ compassion and help.

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**To interview RAR national president Marie Sellstrom, call her on 0417 398 528.**

*[Rural Australians for Refugees](#) is a grassroots movement seeking compassionate treatment of those seeking asylum.*